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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 004668

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/25/2012

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#) [IT](#) [ITPREL](#) [IRAQI](#) [FREEDOM](#)

SUBJECT: ITALIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON IRAQ: BERLUSCONI  
UNDERScores ALLIANCE WITH U.S.

REF: A. ROME 4625

[1](#)B. ROME 4484

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CLASSIFIED BY: POL MINCOUNS THOMAS COUNTRYMAN, REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: IN HIS PRESENTATIONS BEFORE PARLIAMENT, ITALY'S PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI FOCUSED ON THE NEED TO SUPPORT THE UNITED STATES, UNDERScoreD THE THREAT FROM IRAQ'S WEAPONS CAPABILITIES, AND NOTED THAT MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS MUST BE EFFECTIVE IN ORDER TO KEEP INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES FROM ACTING UNILATERALLY. THE GOVERNING COALITION IS LINED UP SQUARELY BEHIND THE PRIME MINISTER. THE OPPOSITION MAINTAINS ITS RESERVATIONS, ESPECIALLY THE NEED TO AVOID UNILATERAL ACTION, WITH PUBLIC STATEMENTS HEAVY ON THE NEED TO "PREVENT WAR" AND NEGATIVE ON POTENTIAL ITALIAN INVOLVEMENT. PRIVATELY, THE MORE CENTRIST ELEMENTS OF THE OPPOSITION ARE PREPARED TO CONCEDE THE POTENTIAL NEED FOR MILITARY INTERVENTION -- UNDER UN AUSPICES. EMBASSY CONTINUES TO HIGHLIGHT THE NATURE OF THE THREAT TO CONTACTS BOTH IN THE GOVERNMENT AND IN THE OPPOSITION. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI PRESENTED THE GOI POSITION ON IRAQ TO THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES AT 10:30 A.M. ON SEPTEMBER 25 AND TO THE SENATE AT 4:30 P.M. THE SAME DAY. HIS SPEECH FOCUSED ON THE NEED TO SUPPORT THE UNITED STATES AND UNDERScoreD THAT EFFECTIVE MULTILATERAL ACTION COULD PRECLUDE THE NEED FOR UNILATERAL ACTION BY THE USG. THE PRIME MINISTER MADE CLEAR THAT THE THREAT POSED BY SADDAM HUSSEIN AND HIS WMD IS REAL: IT IS "A REGIME THAT THREATENS TO USE DREADFUL CHEMICAL AND BACTERIOLOGICAL TOOLS THAT COULD LEAD TO DRAMATIC EVENTS." BERLUSCONI EMPHASIZED THAT ITALY, ON THE BASIS OF ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS, MUST WORK WITH EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES TO ELIMINATE THE IRAQI THREAT AND IRAQI WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND TO ENSURE A STRONG, DETAILED, CONFIDENTIAL

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CLEAR UN RESOLUTION DEFINING CONDITIONS FOR THE "MEASURED USE OF FORCE" IN CASE OF A NEW IRAQI CHALLENGE TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. HE CHARACTERIZED THE HISTORICAL COST OF INACTION AS "INCALCULABLE." THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE, THEREFORE, IS THE CONSTRUCTION OF A COALITION CAPABLE OF IMPOSING ON IRAQ RESPECT FOR A NEW, STRONG, CLEAR AND PRESSING UN RESOLUTION. REFERRING TO ITALY'S CONSTITUTION, BERLUSCONI SAID "ITALY REPUDIATES WAR AS AN OFFENSIVE INSTRUMENT," BUT ADDED THAT PREVENTION IS SOMETIMES NECESSARY.

[1](#)3. (C) THE GOVERNING COALITION LINED UP BEHIND THE PRIME MINISTER. MEETING WITH THE DCM AWAY FROM THE DEBATE, CHAMBER FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN GUSTAVO SELVA (NATIONAL ALLIANCE, AN) SAID HIS DEFENSE COMMITTEE COUNTERPART, LUIGI RAMPONI (AN), WAS TAKING THE SAME POSITION AS THE PM IN THE CHAMBER EVEN AS SELVA AND THE DCM MET (REF A). FERDINANDO ADORNATO, CHAIRMAN OF THE CHAMBER'S CULTURE AND SCIENCE COMMITTEE AND FORMER PARTY SPOKESMAN, WOULD SPEAK FOR BERLUSCONI'S FORZA ITALIA (FI) PARTY. "WE WILL NOT LEAVE THE U.S. ALONE," SELVA ASSURED US.

[1](#)4. (U) OPPOSITION REPRESENTATIVES, NOT SURPRISINGLY, OPPOSED BERLUSCONI'S STATEMENT. MARGHERITA (DAISY) PARTY PRESIDENT FRANCESCO RUTELLI SAID THERE WAS NO SPACE FOR A UNILATERAL SOLUTION IN EITHER WAR OR PEACE. NOTHING CAN SUBSTITUTE FOR UN LEGITIMACY, AND A U.S. DECISION CANNOT AUTOMATICALLY BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL OR ITALIAN ONE. LIKE DEMOCRATS OF THE LEFT (DS) REPRESENTATIVES, RUTELLI EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR ITALY TO WORK WITH ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES. (RUTELLI ADDED "AND AMERICA.") DS SECRETARY PIERO FASSINO RHETORICALLY ASKED BERLUSCONI: WHAT CONSEQUENCES CONFIDENTIAL

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WOULD WAR HAVE FOR RELATIONS BETWEEN WESTERN AND ISLAMIC SOCIETIES? WHAT REPLY COULD ITALY EXPECT IN THE WAY OF TERRORIST ACTS? WHAT WOULD BE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE MIDDLE EAST? FASSINO SAID THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE SHOWED THAT ITALY SHOULD DO ALL IN ITS POWER TO AVOID WAR. DS PRESIDENT MASSIMO D'ALEMA ACCUSED BERLUSCONI OF BEING NOT AN ALLY OF, BUT SUBSERVIENT TO, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION. IN KOSOVO, HE SAID, THERE WAS THE NEED TO DEFEND CIVILIANS WHO WERE THREATENED AND EVICTED FROM THEIR HOMES. IN AFGHANISTAN, THERE WAS EVIDENCE OF A TERRORIST PRESENCE AND

THE WORLD ACTED IN CONFORMITY WITH INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMIZATION. NOW, HE CONTINUED, ITALY IS CONFRONTED WITH THE IDEA OF A PREVENTIVE WAR, WITH PROPOSED ACTION OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY. D'ALEMA INACCURATELY ACCUSED BERLUSCONI OF FAILING EVEN TO MENTION THE EUROPEAN UNION IN HIS REMARKS. THE GREENS, COMMUNIST RENEWAL, AND THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY ALL CRITICIZED THE SPEECH, AS WELL.

15. (C) PUBLIC REMARKS FROM THE OPPOSITION ARE MORE STRIDENT THAN THOSE THEY MAKE TO US IN PRIVATE. POLMINCOUNS MET SEPARATELY WITH THE PARLIAMENTARY SPOKESPEOPLE ON

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00
	NSAE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00
	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00
	PMB-00	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/007W		
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O 251713Z SEP 02  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6010  
INFO SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
AMCONSUL FLORENCE  
AMCONSUL MILAN  
AMCONSUL NAPLES

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS FOR THE DAISY AND DS PARTIES THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 25. BOTH WERE WILLING TO LISTEN TO U.S. VIEWS AND FULLY CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO PREVENT ANTI-WAR  
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ARGUMENTS FROM BECOMING ANTI-U.S. RHETORIC. BOTH STRONGLY UNDERScored THE IMPERATIVE FOR UN SUPPORT FOR ANY ACTION IN IRAQ. DAISY REPRESENTATIVE LAPO PISTELLI WAS MORE FORWARD-LEANING AND ACKNOWLEDGED THAT UN WEAKNESS COULD FORCE A U.S. REACTION. DS REP MARINA SERENI WAS LESS WILLING TO CONCEDE THE POTENTIAL NEED FOR MILITARY INTERVENTION AND THE FACT THAT IRAQ HELD THE KEY FOR PREVENTING IT. EACH MADE CLEAR THAT BAGHDAD HAD ZERO CREDIBILITY WITH THE ITALIAN LEFT. HOWEVER, EACH SAID THAT THE USG SEEMED TO BE UNDERESTIMATING THE NEGATIVE REGIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF U.S. MILITARY ACTION.

16. (C) THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPUTY DIPLOMATIC ADVISER, PAOLO DIONISI, TOLD DCM AND POLMINCOUNS THE AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 25 THAT BERLUSCONI WAS VERY SATISFIED WITH HIS STATEMENT BEFORE PARLIAMENT AND WITH THOSE MADE BY HIS COALITION PARTNERS. DIONISI THOUGHT OPPOSITION REACTION WAS PREDICTABLE AND MANAGEABLE.

17. (C) COMMENT: IN HIS SPEECH, BERLUSCONI DID A SOLID JOB IN CONTINUING TO LAY THE GROUND TO BRING PUBLIC OPINION BEHIND HIM IF THE U.S. CALLS ON ITALY TO SUPPORT ACTION AGAINST IRAQ (REF B). HE URGED INTERNATIONAL ACTION, BUT UNDERScored SUCH ACTION MUST BE STRONG, CLEAR, DECISIVE -- AND BACKED BY THE WILLINGNESS TO USE FORCE. HIS COALITION IS SUPPORTING THE PM IN HIS EFFORTS TO BRING THE ITALIAN PUBLIC ALONG. OPPOSITION INSISTENCE ON A UN IMPRIMATUR, HOWEVER, IS ALSO A VERY REAL REFLECTION OF PUBLIC OPINION HERE. EVEN ITALIANS ALREADY PERSUADED THAT WE MUST ACT AGAINST IRAQ UNDERScore THAT ACTION UNDER A UN UMBRELLA IS FAR PREFERABLE TO ACTION ALONE OR BY ONLY A FEW. CHAMBER FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
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COMMITTEE CHAIR SELVA EXPRESSED SATISFACTION FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH THE DCM, SAYING "YOU HAVE REINFORCED JUST THOSE POINTS I WANTED TO HEAR" WITH REFERENCE TO THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT BUSH HAS NOT DECIDED ABSOLUTELY IN FAVOR OF MILITARY ACTION AND THAT THE U.S. WOULD PREFER TO ACT THROUGH THE UN AND IN CONCERT WITH ITS ALLIES. IF AND WHEN THE TIME COMES, BERLUSCONI WILL DO HIS UTMOST TO HELP AND SUPPORT THE USG, BUT HIS ABILITY TO ACT WILL BE CONSIDERABLY RESTRICTED ABSENT A UN MANDATE, OR AT LEAST A BROAD AND COHESIVE INTERNATIONAL COALITION.

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